"A large white building, which looks as if a Chinaman had mixed together a Birmingham factory and an Italian villa, every now and then throwing in a strong dash of the style of his own country by way of improvement. It is three stories high, and one wing is devoted to the six 'beautiful missises' who compose the female part of his establishment."

On his return from Nepaul by Bombay, the author visited Lucknow, Delhi, Agra, Ellora, and other places of interest. Of Shah Jehan's tomb, at Agra, he says:—

"The greatest sight which Agra affords is the far-famed Taj Mahal: situated on the banks of the river, it is a conspicuous object from every quarter, and is as beautiful in its proportions when seen from a distance as in its details when more closely and minutely inspected: an unfailing source of gratification to the beholder, it well merits repeated visits. In its vastness, in its costly material, in its beautiful proportion, and in its delicacy of detail, it stands a noble monument of the talent which devised, and the skill which executed it. It is said to have incessantly occupied 20,000 men for twenty-two years, and three million pounds sterling were expended upon it."

Miscellanea.

The Skeleton Building System.—Our readers may have heard of that extraordinary phenomenon, the skeleton-ship. We begin to think that in a few years Glasgow will, in some respects, be a skeleton-city, and that it will ultimately disappear in a gale of wind, or tumble into a mass of ruins, like Lisbon in 1755. There is no doubt that the mere shell of a city is rising around us, and that, although dressed and decked out in all the frippery of modern elegance and refinement, many of the new houses are ricketty unsubstantial fabrics, in which it would be positively dangerous to take shelter in a storm. These remarks are more especially applicable to the dwellings now in course of erection in different parts of the city for poorer classes of tenants. Specimens of similar ricketty structures, which, although erected with almost miraculous rapidity, are old enough to be taken down before they are finished, are now rising like mushrooms in the West End. This system is most shameful, and will, sooner or later, be productive of fatal disasters. The tumbling-down season will come at last—we may venture to say at no very distant period; and then we shall have houses, or the shells of houses, rattling about our ears in all directions. The only question of that day will be, which house or which street goes next? What crescent tumbled last night? How many poor people were buried alive in their kitchens this morning? Let once the epidemic or falling-sickness among the houses commence, and then we shall have Glasgow melting away like snow in summer, and nothing left to mark its site, except the cathedral, the college, and a few other solid structures many centuries old. As for some of the steeples, of which such a plentiful crop has sprung up in particular directions of late, they will be all blown over in a few years, like the timber tabernacle at Tarbet, which was capsized in a storm last winter.—*Glasgow Reformer's Gazette.*

Destruction of Old Verulam.—Mr. Roach Smith has brought before the Society of Antiquaries the case of Old Verulam, the well-known site of the celebrated Verulamium of Roman Britain. It appears that the south-eastern portion of the ground has been bought by a freehold building society, and is already marked out for excavations for houses. Mr. Roach Smith reproached the society for its apathy in past times on such occasions, and referring to the destruction of the Roman theatre found at Old Verulam a few years since, expressed a hope that the present Government might be induced to take up the question of preserving the ancient national monuments, which were daily being sacrificed for the sake of alleged improvements. The greatest interest is attached to Old Verulam, as it is of very great extent, and no systematic researches have ever been made, while it is well known the ground cannot be dug into without discovering the foundations of buildings.

Institution of Civil Engineers: Conversazione.—The session was terminated on Tuesday evening by the usual conversazione, given by the president, Mr. J. M. Rendel. In the reception saloons were Landseer's "Random Shot," Ward's picture of "James II. reading the Despatch," Turner's "Blue Lights," and other pictures by Stanfield, Haghe, Egg, Herring, Anadell, Phillip, Wehnert, Lance, Wood, Crowley, Rothwell, Niemann, Kennedy, Winterhalter, Wilson, and Carmichael. Amongst the models was one shewing the anastatic process of printing, exhibited by Messrs. Glynn and Appel, who had recently introduced a method of preparing paper by the addition to it, while still in a state of pulp, of an insoluble salt of copper, and a peculiar preparation of palm oil, so that when an attempt was made to reproduce any document, it became fixed to the plate, and no transfer could be made. Messrs. Napier and Son exhibited an automaton sovereign weighing machine, which differed from those now in use at the bank by its separating the coin into three classes, the too light,—those between certain limits, which might be variable,—and the too heavy, instead of simply into the light and the full. Mr. Appolds' arrangement for shewing water below 20 degrees without freezing, excited attention. Mr. Goddard (of Ipswich) explained a gas cooking-stove, and an asbestos fire, in lieu of that formerly produced by platinum.

Cast-Iron Carriage Ways.—In noticing some experiments at Glasgow, we lately called attention to the risk of slipperiness on a little tear and wear in the cast-iron paving proposed for carriage roads. The same fear we perceive has led the City Sewers Commission, acting on a report from their surveyor, Mr. Haywood, to refuse permission to Messrs. Kean and Co. to lay down such paving at their own expense in some leading thoroughfare in the City. The practicability of such paving when new depends on its cross grooving, and so long as that lasts the way is said to be safe, as well as free from much noise; but notwithstanding favourable reports from Glasgow, Mr. Haywood states that he cannot divest himself of the belief that the paving must be more slippery than stone paving. "It is quite evident," he remarks, "that whatever foot-hold is obtained, must be obtained by the aid of the grooving. Upon the grooving the whole safety of the traffic depends. Should this be effectual when new, it is only a question of time before it must become insufficient; but what time and amount of traffic it will take to destroy this security, involves the question of the durability of the paving, and the durability is the real question of its cost, points yet undetermined, and only to be determined by trial. From observations I have made of the effect of the traffic upon the gully gratings, I am induced to believe that cast-iron will not be found to possess that durability beneath a heavy traffic which most persons seem to expect from it." Were it possible, by recasting, to keep up the freshness of the grooving at a moderate cost, diminution of noise and other advantages might render such paving a practicable substitute in the metropolis for wood-paving, but this seems to be a very doubtful question.

Sale of Marshal Soult's Pictures.—This sale has greatly excited the artistical public in Paris, and has surprised them as well by the small prices brought by some excellent pictures as by the enormous sum given for "The Conception," by Murillo, which was no less than 23,440*l*. It was purchased for the Louvre. Two other Murillos, one, "St. Peter in Prison," and the other, "Jesus and John, children," were purchased by M. Thurneyssen, the banker, for the Emperor of Russia, the price of the former being 6,040*l*. and of the latter 2,520*l*. "The Christ carrying his Cross," of Sebastian del Piombo, was also purchased by the same gentleman for the Emperor of Russia, for 1,640*l*. The "Mater Dolorosa," (Murillo), brought 424*l*. "The Miracle of the Diego" (by the same), 3,420*l*. "The Flight into Egypt" (by the same), 2,040*l*. The "Via de los Dolores" (Morales), 960*l*.

Unstamped Agreements for Tenancies.—*Birmingham County Court.—Blood v. Kimberley.*—This action was brought to recover 9*l*. 10*s*. as for a half-year's rent of premises in Newhall-street, let by Mr. Blood to Mr. Kimberley. The letting was by an instrument running in the usual terms in many similar cases, and signed by the parties, viz. "*Plaintiff* agrees to let, and *defendant* to take the premises in Newhall-street, at the yearly rental of 19*l*." On this, Mr. Brown, for defendant, without going into the merits, at once objected to its reception, and contended that although in form "an agreement," it was in reality a lease. Consequently before it could be received in evidence it must have the proper stamp impressed upon it. Mr. Brown supported this view by quoting the several statutes referring to the point. Mr. Hall, for the plaintiff, was not prepared to negative the proposition thus advanced, and the learned judge taking the same view of the law as propounded in Mr. Brown's argument, and characterising the question raised as one of very great importance, directed that the plaintiff should be nonsuited, and on application also allowed costs.—*Birmingham Journal.*

Electro-telegraphic Progress.—A submarine telegraph between Holland and England is projected. The Dutch Government have granted to Mr. A. Ruyssenaers a concession for its establishment. Mr. Ruyssenaers is now engaged in forming in London a company for carrying it out. This line would render our telegraphic communication with the Continent independent of the French and Belgian lines (which war, or other contingencies, may any day close against us). The Dutch and Prussian Governments take a lively interest in its success. The business of the French and English submarine line is said to be so increasing, that it is proposed to have, in all, between this country and the Continent, exclusive of the Holland line, sixteen lines of wire at work. As the lines multiply, might they not be made of a less ponderous and expensive description, even though less durable? The temporary damage of one or two merely out of a considerable number, would be little or no public inconvenience, while, on the contrary, the convenience of the public would be greatly promoted, and capital saved by multiplying cheap lines.

A Plate-glass Window Assurance Company has been established. In their explanation the promoters of the plan state that—"Its object is the security of the owners of plate-glass windows from any of various risks, and of which the following may be recapitulated, viz., carelessness of servants, opening and closing of shop fronts, cleansing of windows, explosion from gas, settlements of buildings and shop facias, the crowded state of the various thoroughfares, the alternations of temperature, malice, and also, no uncommon circumstance where roads are macadamized, from accidents arising from the casting of stones from the feet of horses when going at great speed." Such a company we suspect will, for one thing at least, literally afford a premium on carelessness, both of servants and of masters.

Mr. Fairbairn, F.R.S.—The National Institute of France have elected Mr. William Fairbairn, C.E. of Manchester, a member of the Institute.

Road Making.—Tenders sent in for making roads and drains to the Fairoak Estate, the property of the Newport, Monmouthshire, Freehold Land Society. Mr. R. G. Thomas, engineer.

George Seaborn, Chepstow	£2,730	1	5
Benjamin Farmer, Newport	2,588	11	8
Morgan and Marsh, ditto	2,455	17	0
Thomas Richards, ditto	2,232	0	0
James and Hardie, ditto (accepted)	1,985	0	0

Road Making.—Tenders for making roads, and doing the required works at Beerhacket Enclosure, in the county of Dorset. Quantity given.

England, Bradford	£479	15	0
Lansdale, Marston	415	13	9
Vincent, Thornford	366	15	4½
Green and Penny, Sherborne	346	1	0
Lonsdale, West Camel	325	11	0
Pish, Sturminster	190	2	4

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